

Oct. 25, '76.

1.

Venerable Phra Dhammadharo,

Ursula's card, sent from the airport just before you, Khun Sujin and the other friends left for Sri Lanka was very consoling and gave me many kusala cittas, after some distressing experiences I will tell you about. You will make many new Dhamma friends in Sri Lanka, and you will certainly meet my Dhamma friend Mr. Abayasekera at the Forest Hermitage.

I have never been under attack on account of Buddhism, since I was only with Dhamma friends and kept rather quiet, did not go about lecturing. And now it happened. I would like ~~you~~ to share my experiences with the other Dhamma friends, since they may have similar experiences, especially when they have returned to their home countries.

In one week there were two lectures and one long T.V. session. One of the lectures was for a so-called interreligion group. They say they want to study different religions, but they use the occasion to corner you and ~~want~~ prove that Christianity is best. They kept on comparing, wanted to make me say that Mahayana is different from Hinayana, attacked me that I am not vegetarian. Some questions you just ~~have~~ to answer straight, even when you know it will not please the ~~the~~ cittas now think whether I did enough to think myself into their situation, and make up my answer accordingly. That is regret, and ~~at such a moment~~ cittas ~~have to~~ decide in split seconds what to answer. I thought it is a good type of kusala to lecture, but what a lot of aversion in between. The time of lecturing I enjoyed, because I did not use one difficult term, no ... rupa, citta, accumulation or condition. This is a good idea for a first lecture, I find. I just spoke about my own experiences in Buddhism, and in what ways I find Buddhism so helpful in my life. Then came the questioning, and this was too difficult for me, I guess, since I am not experienced ~~...li~~ to talk with people who dislike Buddhism and cling to their own beliefs, maybe they are frightened. If you have done it would help me a lot if you could tell me your experiences in this field.

The lecture in Krik... was just for the same group with the Indonesian monk, I had talked for before and this was very nice. Also for them I did not use any difficult term, spoke about vi...aka in our lives and they all listened and had some good questions. (Before I used to talk about Pali terms, and then they closed their eyes, maybe went to sleep.)

Then there was the T.V. interview. This is in a teaching program about religions of the world. Two interviews of ten minutes on T.V. and then twice twelve minutes on tape which will be printed in a book next spring. I went to those who registered for this course. I will translate... do you English for my Dhamma friends when it comes... now I saw what you had said yes, I want to come... X came up to see me at home with the director of the program. He is very much like the owner of the ~~book~~ ~~in de Paris~~ in Varanasi (you, Jonathan, Ann and Pinna will understand). He probably wants to instill the same doubts he has about life and kusala into the minds of others. He tried to corner me from the first moment, and during the program even more so. But I also thought of the many listeners and liked to look more towards the eye of the camera than into his eyes. You never know that you might help one or two of the many questions, and this is a desire from the editor. I will make up a list of questions to the Dhamma friends, since I think all of us may encounter such questions.

More often ever I realize my thinking is conditioned. We have been educated in logical thinking, but it is only one type of thinking, it really does... I mean. They ask you logical questions and expect an answer. It is also logical, but, it is not always so helpful. How can we... everything would be very, very simple, that to do... cornered? I said: when I meet you next year, you are still... van Gorkom, how can you say that realities change. People have something stable, their character. Imagine, I could not use the word accumulation. I tried to explain carefully that each moment of our life falls away, but that how we were before determines (I did not say conditions, that is too difficult) how we go later on, and can't we experience this?

(What I think is: when, at each moment changes and what a strange idea to think that it can be stored in a little room in... remains.)

All I... went on saying that everything falls away what sense does it have to cultivate wholesomeness, why not enjoy life the way you can. I also think Buddhism makes one a fatalist. To such questions I could only answer that I believe in the value of wholesomeness, even each moment falls away. And, in fact, those who do not see the value of wholesomeness do not want to cultivate the Path the Buddha taught. He expected a logical answer, but to such question one cannot give a logical

answer. These questions do not arise when you live Buddhism. He also talked about doubt. I explained that you do not doubt what you experience right now, but you may doubt things you do not experience right now, things in the future. If doubt arises, than you do not doubt about your doubt. (Of course, there are many degrees of doubt, and though we ~~do not~~ know that the characteristic of kusala is quite different from the characteristic of akusala, we still doubt when exactly kusala appears, and when akusala, since they arise time and again, shortly one after the other.) He did said that he does not believe it when people say: I experience this or that, because psychologists told him that people can make themselves believe anything, they say they have really experienced it. True, but he does not know that the eightfold Path is not about extraordinary experiences, but very common experiences like seeing now, hearing now, thinking now. We all know that we make many mistakes and believe there is direct experience of a reality when it is still thinking, but at least, we learn the difference. (I did not tell him all that.) Afterwards he said that he wonders whether I am not caught in a system and want to believe all that. He thinks that Buddhism is a system, and does not get it (although I told him many times) that the Buddha ~~ever~~ spoke about realities of daily life, no system you have to believe in. Finally he said that he finds Buddhism the most impractical belief (because I do not want to kill mosquitos) and that he never could become a Buddhist. I said: it does not matter.

If I had asked Lodewijk's opinion about some of his remarks before, because he had told me not to use any terms and this was good. Well, it caused Lodewijk to do kusala, although he was so tired. Never before have I heard him speak so beautifully in the most simple words on Buddhism.

It was a good experience (although many moments of aversion, and I was very nervous at the beginning of the session, Mr. X worked on that) not to use terms, and how I cling to them, the terms nama and rupa dominate my 'thought-life'. Since they represent realities they will present themselves anyway, and not by our trying. It must become evident that some realities are experiences, others not. Now the word experience may be understood in different ways. Sarah and I talked about this on the way to Hook of Holland. We talked about seeing which is the experience of a visible object and about awareness which may also experience visible object, but in a way different from seeing, since awareness does not see, but can know, experience the characteristic of visible object.

object. Someone may say: ~~but~~ I experience seeing. That may not be awareness of seeing, right of that characteristic, pure nama, different from rupa. It may just re: noticing of seeing which is quite something else, not awareness, very precise knowledge of the characteristic of s. s. n i: appears. Then we learn again: this is thinking, not ~~it's~~ s, thinking has a characteristic different from seeing. This is the way to learn. (I just repeated our conversation, because I know that there are easily misunderstandings about experiencing awareness and 'noticing'.)

We talked a lot about daily life, the daily life of laypeople. And how one can exaggerate even ~~the~~ good things, like not loosing one moment so as not to miss a Dhamma conversation. Jenni said that she had had guilty feelings about her art work, and had to miss opportunities of hearing Dhamma. But who can tell when sati arises, also in the middle of your work? I like to admit that I enjoyed the make up part of it very much, but certainly, there was hardness, there was effort. I said to the lady who did the make up that you do not have to be a monk in order to develop the eightfold Path, that it is so much daily life that you would not believe it, and even while talking it can be developed. I said. I also found that we can be aware of ~~max~~ aversion, but what a lot of hardn . s it can condition and there is also the experience of hardr . s, so, it really is difficult to know exactly which moment is ~~it~~, not discouraging though!

Coming back Having come back worn out from T.V. (Lodewijk in New York, thus all alone) I found a very nice letter from Sue and Don , from Adelaid. ~~Max~~ Kusala vipaka . (They do not see your father so often and asked me now to send any correspondance to Liz Williams, I do not know whether things did not work out as you have planned?) The question about effort: ' I have aversion & the thought . . . nothing to be done although there is no time to consider . . . the mind . . . are kusala and some kusala . . . said, even . . . conventional level, that . . . encouraged. ' If . . . I am trying to provide a space . . . hic. can . . . in . . . lity exist-- or perhaps my . . . I . . . developed enough to directly perceive my thinking as , . . . i king...'

This question is also sked by people who think that buddhism promotes fatalism, and Sue and Don are right that certainly kusala should be encouraged. The encouragement is most important and is a condition for kusala. The Buddha stresses very much that the encouragement of kusala kamma is kusala kamma in itself,

This part of the letter is to Sue and Don, but all my letters are for all Dhamma friends, anyway, so it is the same.)

and that the encouragement of akusala kamma is akusala kamma itself. Because encouragement is very much a condition, listening to good friends or to bad friends. That is not the only condition, also how you were in the past: if kusala or akusala you did before. All this shows how kusala or akusala are conditioned realities, they do not fall from the blue sky, just like that. Can you say that a self is master of something that arises because of its own conditions? Self plays no part in it, there is no room for self. It works without any self. Kusala intention wants to do what, in the next moment kusala intention wants to do akusal, where is the self, is it akusala intention, or is it kusala intention? Kusala intention does not know anything about kusala intention, they have nothing to do with each other; no self who coordinates everything.

When kusala citta arises, there is right effort with that kusala citta. You do not sit down and think: effort for kusala, effort for kusala. It just happens when it is the right time. The same is true for akusala. Lila wrote that she finds that it is better with ~~the~~^{her} dosa. But I find that when the object is right for me the dosa it arises. For me it is for example Mr. X, for someone else it happens when he misses the bus. It all depends on one's accumulations. As for the thinking, in order to know that there is no self you do not have to think of aggregates in order to know that there is no self. If you have a minute to think of one thing, can you? It changes within splitseconds and that shows: no self which is master.

Sue also writes about attachment to the present moment. But there is not only attachment, also aversion and a lot of moha. It is the eightfold path not to try to change reality, only little by little to ... item. Jenni likes ..., likes art, she does not care whether likes, but she does not care. arise now and then ... wise, if has no ... illness, heat, not only attachment, ... attachment is not only reality in the world. We can not get rid of attachment, but to know realities as they are. Sarah, Jenni and I had been talking so much about art, that when my guests had left, I took the watercolors (something I had not done for years) and wanted to check whether there are more akusala cittas arising when painting. Whatever we do, there are more akusala cittas than kusala cittas, it is a fact. I painted for Lodewijk (his birthday) a

Buddha image as an illustration of the Girimananda sutta which I typed out for him. There is attachment to something beautiful even if it is a Buddha statue (check when you are in the temple) but also: there was dana, there was respect for the Buddha. Many different moments: many akusala (the moha you do not notice, but they are there) and some kusala. So it is when cooking, and no matter what you do, it does Jenni said some people have aversion when there is talk about jewels or cloths, they think it should not be an object of conversation. But, it does not matter when you are not a monk. I find that the eightfold Path works much better when you do not try to one as a layperson does not try to imitate monks. Jewels and cloths; they also what is seen is visible object, and sure we are attached. Let us not pretend we are not! Jenni said she is attached to the idea of marriage and a family. The Buddha gave very good counsels to married people, and for the family life. Many opportunities for metta and karuna.

I received in a row very nice Dhamma letters from Lila, Dr. Wimalajeewa. Dr. Wimalajeewa (I wrote to him about your stay in Kandy) likes the tapes he received of Khun Sujin and others. I will now go into his letter: you say that since you have accumulated the way of meditation you used to do, you go into it automatically now and then. I think it is eightfold Path to use anything like I use cooking and ironing, I mean, sati can arise any time. When we are inclined to painting or to certain types of meditation we were instructed before, it is helpful to know that we would not do them if we had not learnt them, that they arise because of their own conditions, not because of a self which has control. Another matter which may be helpful is to realise that whatever we do, there are bound to be many more akusala cittas than kusala cittas. For me: even while listening to Dhamma tapes, there are many more akusala cittas than kusala cittas. Thus we will recognize better when there is attachment to what we are doing. You speak about the practice of bare attention and I heard the term before, and never understood it. Which cetasika? Why is it so bare?

Jenni will see you, but much later, since she goes to Indonesia first. She only carries the tapes made at my home, and I am afraid, though they are fun for ourselves, we talk too often at the same time and it might not be clear for others to listen to

Jenni lives in Adelaide. She will hand you my Letters from the Hague. You are right: nibbāna is also anattā. So long as we have not experienced nibbāna, nibbāna is only a word to us.

Lila's letter: She wrote that she was very interested in what Jīl had said about 'defilements arising even when one's physical environment is pleasant and few people...' She had to give up her place in the woods and is now going to travel again through the wide world, maybe even to Europa. I want to tell her: The abbot from Denver could maybe get a copy of Abhidhamma in Daily Life in Thailand when he goes there, because I have every book except a lending out copy, given away, and all my talks are finished now, given away, the cupboard is empty. I like what you said about talking Dhamma to others: they listen if you keep it short. "But perhaps just a word here and there will ring familiar old tunes started many lifetimes ago and some day perhaps a book or a contact will be there for that realtor and friend and the interest will start to grow more, and then he'll be on the path" I thought of this many times these days with my lectures and Mr. A. Then it seems less hopeless. Maybe next life they listen again, who knows? It is never wasted. I found it a touching story about your father. You read to him from Rahula's book (and it is a simple book in simple language) when he was so sick and said: I knew it already, I've known it many times before. I also like anthologies of other people's letters, and how a letter of someone else can help you when you need it, I find.

Khun Ursula's letter: She wrote to me in German about Khun Sujin's last lecture, stressing that the eightfold Path ^{is not} so difficult as, but that people make it so difficult because of their lack of understanding of it. She is, Khun Ursula, gives us such a good reminder of tasting (and often it tastes so good and we are not aware); she was eating icecream with friends: 'We tasted and tasting-consciousness experienced taste: Stangmo, papaya, carrots, gue etc. taste appeared later. Also coldness appeared and then there was no I in coldness nor in the body-consciousness which experiences coldness...

Venerable Phra Dhammadharo, this letter was a letter for many friends. There was animal talk, but with the aim to show that laypeople can use it as object of awareness. With all my best wishes,

Nina.